

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
TENTH CIRCUIT COURT DISTRICT

SERVING COUNTIES OF:

CLARKE  
KEMPER  
LAUDERDALE  
WAYNE



KASSIE COLEMAN  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

POST OFFICE BOX 5163  
MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI 39302  
TELEPHONE: (601) 482-9757

MARVELL M. GORDON  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT  
ATTORNEY

PATRICK I. STUBBS  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT  
ATTORNEY

KATE S. MARTIN  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT  
ATTORNEY

ROBERT BAYSINGER  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR

SHANE MCILWAIN  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2019

Contact: [da10@lauderdalecounty.org](mailto:da10@lauderdalecounty.org); 601-482-9757

**District Attorney's Office Details Outreach to Local Family on Closed Case**

Meridian, MS – In an effort to respond clearly and concisely to any remaining inquiries, the 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office is releasing the following information regarding the investigation and grand jury proceedings related to the death of Christian Andreacchio.

The timeline below details the current DA's consistent efforts to serve the Andreacchio family and all citizens by being responsive to all their requests. District Attorney Kassie Coleman's offer to meet with the family—first made less than two weeks after she took office in November of 2018—still stands. Since that time the family has declined to meet.

As with all cases, the District Attorney's Office is ready to receive and review any new evidence. Because a grand jury has heard the evidence and declined to indict this case, the District Attorney will only resubmit it to a grand jury if and when new evidence is received. The District Attorney takes all credible evidence seriously no matter how much time has passed.

The District Attorney asks that if anyone has new or additional information on any case that has previously been rejected by a grand jury, they immediately bring that information to law enforcement or the district attorney's office so that it may be reviewed for resubmission and consideration by a new grand jury.

District Attorney Kassie Coleman has instituted an open door policy for families in the community during and after the completion of all relevant investigations of crime and pending prosecutorial actions. DA Coleman will continue to be accountable to all of our families while carrying out her prosecutorial duty to the full extent of the law in each and every case.

The current DA never received a request from the Andreacchio family for records that the family sought from other investigating agencies pursuant to the Mississippi Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Other

investigating agencies denied some requests and also released some records to third parties. District Attorney Kassie Coleman has never received a FOIA request for this file, and she has not released any portion of the file. In May of 2018 the family was made aware that they had been granted access to records sought from the Attorney General, but they did not retrieve those documents.

#### ANDREACCHIO INVESTIGATIVE TIMELINE:

Christian Andreacchio passed away on February 26, 2014. The Meridian Police Department (MPD) determined the death be a suicide.

The coroner signed the official Certificate of Death on February 26, 2014. The cause of death was listed as: Gunshot wound to the head. The coroner also selects from the following options available: accident, suicide, homicide, pending investigation, or undetermined. The coroner chose: Undetermined. The death certificate is issued based on the coroner's findings, not the Medical Examiner.

The autopsy was conducted on February 27, 2014. On March 28, 2014, the Medical Examiner's Office issued a report containing the final autopsy findings. Cause of Death: Gunshot wound to the head. Manner of Death: Suicide.

On June 24, 2014, agents with the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation (MBI) met with the Andreacchio family to begin their investigation.

In December 2014, the MBI agents submitted their final report to former District Attorney Bilbo Mitchell affirming the MPD's investigation and findings of suicide.

On August 5, 2015, the Meridian Police Department, at the request of the Andreacchio family to further investigate the case, assigned a new detective, Jerry Bratu.

In January 2017, MPD Captain Jay Arrington was assigned to the case due to conflicts between Detective Bratu and the Andreacchio family.

On February 22, 2017, then-District Attorney Bilbo Mitchell recused himself and requested that Attorney General Jim Hood review the case and present it to a Grand Jury. ([Attachment #1](#)) Unlike the limited resources available to the district attorney's offices, the Attorney General has employees whose primary duties include conducting actual field investigations regarding criminal cases. Two Attorney General investigators were assigned. Upon completion of their investigation, the case was presented to a Grand Jury in October 2017. Neither former District Attorney Bilbo Mitchell nor anyone from his office were present when the case was presented. A Special Assistant Attorney General and two investigators from the Attorney General's Office presented all known information to the Grand Jury. Upon hearing all evidence, the Grand Jury returned a No True Bill, which means they found insufficient evidence to indict the case.

On May 9, 2018, the Attorney General's Office granted the Andreacchio family's request to obtain a copy of the file pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. ([Attachment #2](#)) The family was made aware that they had been granted access to records sought from the Attorney General but they did not retrieve those documents.

On October 31, 2018, former District Attorney Bilbo Mitchell retired.

Governor Phil Bryant selected current District Attorney Kassie Coleman to complete Mitchell's unexpired term. She was sworn in as District Attorney on November 2, 2018.

On November 14, 2018, District Attorney Kassie Coleman spoke with Todd Andreacchio by telephone. Mr. Andreacchio advised District Attorney Kassie Coleman that his family wanted the case reopened. District Attorney Kassie Coleman generally explained the possible barriers to resubmitting this case to a grand jury. DA Coleman specifically explained that once a grand jury heard evidence in a case and found that evidence insufficient to support an indictment, additional evidence was needed to present the case to a new grand jury. During this call, the District Attorney agreed to meet with the Andreacchios to see what could be done. The District Attorney also requested to join a planned meeting with the Meridian Police Department. Mr. Andreacchio agreed that she should join that meeting. That planned meeting with the police department was postponed, and the new meeting date was never shared with the DA so that she could attend.

On December 10, 2018, the District Attorney's office received a letter via certified mail from Mrs. Rae Andreacchio. ([Attachment #3](#)) Due to the inaccuracies in the letter, District Attorney Kassie Coleman called Mr. Andreacchio to discuss it. During this December 10<sup>th</sup> call Mr. Andreacchio acknowledged the previously planned MPD meeting had been rescheduled, and that he failed to advise District Attorney of the date change.

The District Attorney requested that the Andreacchio family reconsider their refusal to meet with the investigating agencies. Specifically, the District Attorney suggested that all involved agencies should meet with the family together so that they could compare what had been presented to the grand jury with what the family had in order to determine whether or not there was any new or additional evidence available. Mr. Andreacchio again refused this offer of a meeting. This District Attorney reiterated that if the family had any new or additional evidence it would be considered by the District Attorney's Office whenever they provided it.

The next contact between District Attorney and the Andreacchio family occurred on February 4, 2019. Mr. Andreacchio called to request that the District Attorney authorize the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory to release evidence in their possession to a private lab for DNA testing. The DA explained to Mr. Andreacchio that such authorization would have to come from the Attorney General's Office since the case was still theirs. The DA explained that testing which was paid for by the family would be heavily scrutinized at trial. The DA also cautioned Mr. Andreacchio that if the outside, privately paid lab consumed the DNA sample in order to test it, any future criminal defendant would argue against its admissibility since confirmation testing could not be conducted. After advising Mr. Andreacchio of the potential pitfalls of private testing, the DA nevertheless agreed to contact the Mississippi Attorney General's Office to relay the family's request for additional testing. The DA requested that Mr. Andreacchio gather the following information: the point of contact at the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory, the point of contact at the Attorney General's Office, and the point of contact at the private lab, along with a statement from the private lab detailing what additional testing they could provide. This information was necessary in order to maintain the integrity of the investigation, clarify the family's request, and ensure the correct request was conveyed by the DA.

The following day, on February 5, 2019, the District Attorney received a copy of an email from Mrs. Andreacchio to the Mississippi Attorney General's Office which incorrectly claimed that District Attorney Kassie Coleman wanted the DNA released for testing and the file returned to the District Attorney's Office. ([Attachment #4](#)) Mrs. Andreacchio's email included a claim that the family had brought new evidence to the DA. A follow-up phone call was made to Mr. Andreacchio in an attempt to resolve the misunderstanding. Due to the multiple prior miscommunications this telephone conversation with Mr. Andreacchio was recorded. ([Attachment #5](#)) This conversation between District Attorney Kassie Coleman and Mr.

Andreacchio was not confrontational. Mr. Andreacchio apologized for the inaccurate representations and advised the District Attorney that corrections would be made. In this recording, Mr. Andreacchio stated that the "new evidence" referenced in Mrs. Andreacchio's email was taken to the Meridian Police Department, not the District Attorney's Office. However, no formal attempt to correct the misrepresentation that new evidence had been provided to the District Attorney was ever made by the Andreacchio family.

In February 2019, District Attorney Kassie Coleman requested a meeting with the investigators from the Attorney General's Office assigned to the Andreacchio case and asked them to present the case to her and her Assistant District Attorneys as they presented it to the Grand Jury in October 2017. The Attorney General investigators had a PowerPoint presentation prepared for the Grand Jury and they explained all the evidence presented. This presentation covered all statements, evidence, and reports including those provided by the law enforcement agencies, privately paid investigators and privately paid expert witnesses hired by the Andreacchio family. All evidence was presented to the grand jury and no new evidence has been received since that time.

After seeing and hearing the evidence which had been previously presented to the Grand Jury, the District Attorney sought out and spoke with some members of the Grand Jury that heard the Andreacchio case. These jurors advised that they did not feel pressured to return a No True Bill, and that they felt there was insufficient evidence to sustain a conviction. They were told that if new information was developed, the case could and would be resubmitted to a new grand jury at a later date.

In late June 2019, Meridian Police Captain Jay Arrington requested a meeting with the District Attorney. Captain Arrington advised that he wanted an opportunity to present the case as a culpable negligence manslaughter to a new Grand Jury. The District Attorney arranged to formally meet with the Meridian Police Department and the Mississippi Attorney General's Office on July 1, 2019. During that meeting the District Attorney attempted to gain information regarding what, if any, new evidence had been brought forward by the Andreacchio family; what, if any, further investigation would be completed by either of these agencies; what, if any, new theories of criminal liability could be presented; and the status of all evidence and reports in this case. No new evidence had been received.

Two private investigators allegedly working for the Andreacchio family were at the Meridian Police Department when District Attorney Kassie Coleman arrived on July 1, 2019. There had been a meeting between these private investigators and Captain Arrington prior to her arrival. District Attorney Kassie Coleman was not invited to that meeting, and she was not made aware that it was planned. As these private investigators were leaving the police department, they introduced themselves to the District Attorney upon meeting her in the hallway. At that time, District Attorney Kassie Coleman welcomed these investigators to share any information they had gathered with law enforcement so it could be evaluated and pursued. They stated that they did not have anything new but wanted to help if they could. Again, District Attorney Kassie Coleman expressed to them that all information could help as she continued to work on this matter.

During this meeting these private investigators asked Captain Arrington if they would be allowed to review the investigative file. DA Coleman later learned that Captain Arrington secretly recorded conversations that day with the private investigators and with the DA using his body camera equipment. After the meeting at the Meridian Police Department, the private investigators and other individuals posted on social media that District Attorney Kassie Coleman had met with the Meridian Police Department and the Mississippi Attorney General's Office. On July 27, 2019, one of the private investigators released an audio clip from their meeting with Captain Arrington. On August 2, 2019, the City of Meridian responded to a FOIA request and released all audio files which were recorded by Captain Arrington's body camera.

On July 3, 2019, a representative from the Mississippi Attorney General's Office released a copy of a portion of the investigative file via email to an individual who made a FOIA request. Later, on July 17, 2019, a copy of the entire investigative file was mailed by the Mississippi Attorney General's Office to multiple individuals who had made FOIA requests.

District Attorney Kassie Coleman has never received a FOIA request for this file and she has not released any portion of the file.

As noted earlier, the District Attorney's offer to meet with the Andreacchio family still stands. The District Attorney's Office remains ready to receive and review any new evidence. Because a grand jury has heard the evidence and declined to indict this case, the District Attorney will only resubmit it to a grand jury if and when new evidence is received. The District Attorney takes all credible evidence seriously no matter how much time has passed.

The District Attorney asks that if anyone has new or additional information on any case that has previously been rejected by a prior grand jury, they immediately bring that information to law enforcement or the district attorney's office so that it may be reviewed for resubmission and consideration by a new grand jury.

###